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Dean, Bashford

The Dyckman House

[New York?]

[1916?]

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[Dean, Bashford] 1867–1928.

The Dyckman house; built about 1783, restored and presented to the city of New York in MCMXVI. [New York? The Gillis press, 1916?]

47, [1] p. incl. illus. (incl. ports.) plate. 22½cm.

Signed: Bashford Dean, Alexander McMillan Welch, honorary curators.

Another copy in Avery. [1916]

1. Dyckman house, New York. 2. Dyckman family. I. Welch, Alexander McMillan, joint author.

34-15322

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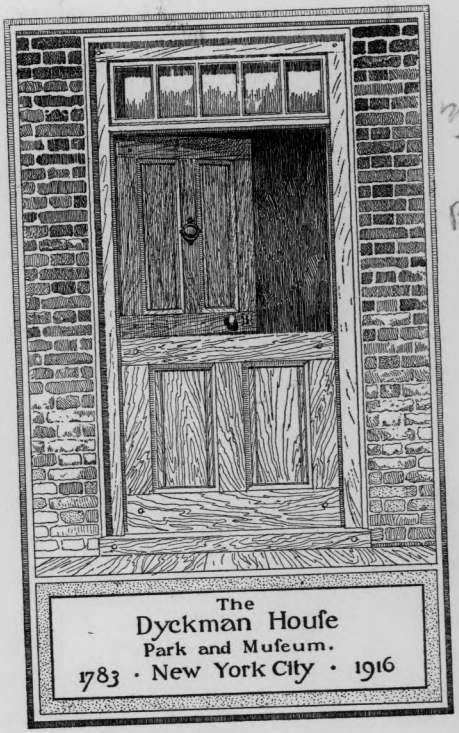
The
Dyckman Houſe
Park and Muſeum.
1783 · New York City · 1916

To Prof. E R A Seligman
with the best regards of
Bashford Dean

THE DYCKMAN HOUSE PARK AND MUSEUM

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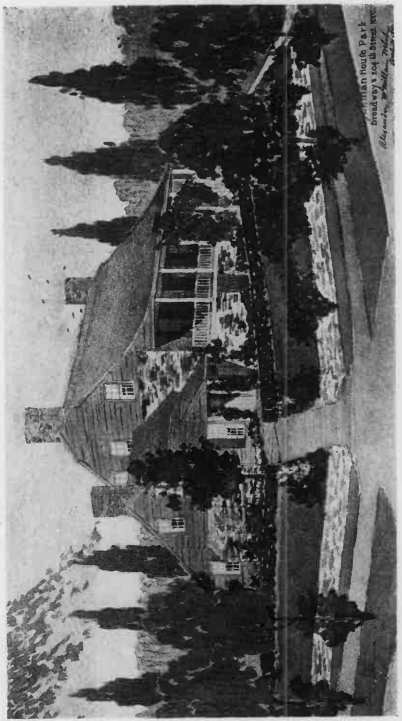
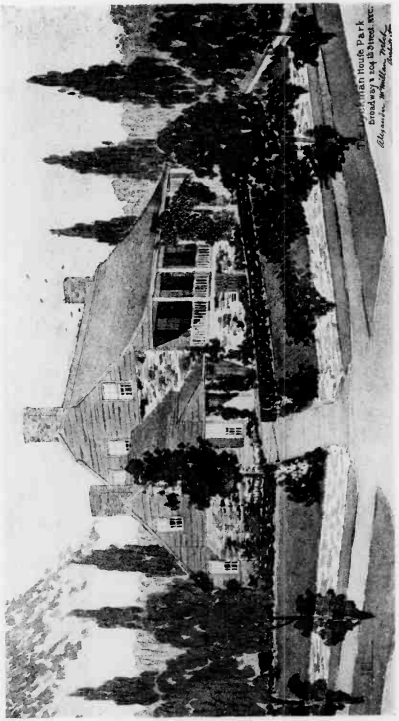


THE DYCKMAN HOUSE, 1916

THE DYCKMAN HOUSE

BUILT ABOUT 1783
RESTORED AND PRESENTED TO
THE CITY OF NEW YORK IN
MCMXVI



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I

INTRODUCTION

THE DYCKMAN HOUSE

NEW YORK has little time to think of bygones. Its life hurries along its few long avenues and runs thickly in its many cross streets without stopping in front of houses which are old, even when historical. There is, perhaps, not a city in the world one-tenth of its size which has less average interest in its own past. It grows quickly, takes its population from everywhere, and tears down its buildings and rebuilds them at a furious rate. In its progress it spares few vestiges of olden times. For one thing, it cannot afford to preserve its land for "sentimental reasons;" it has already too little space for its daily need; its mainland is an island, and rather than spread out broadly it is quite content to grow up in the air. So quickly, indeed, does the memory of its old buildings pass away that little would remain to our knowledge of them, even of a few generations ago, had not a few exceptional people set themselves at that time to picture them in their surroundings and to leave these records to their descendants. How different, indeed, would be our idea of old New York had not a member of our City

Common Council, at no little cost and ridicule, persuaded his fellow members to publish pictures of early landmarks in their annual reports! And to-day, as we thumb the pages of *Valentine's Manual*, how few of the buildings there shown have been left behind!

For buildings in New York which visibly antedate the year 1800 one may long seek in vain. Even in the uppermost part of the island there exists hardly a trace of the simpler life of our people. The old and well-set farms which spread over Yorkville, Manhattanville, Bloomingdale, Carmansville and Harlem have passed quite out of our memory and their old buildings have fallen, one by one, to be replaced by rows of private dwellings of brick or brown-stone, or tall apartments of varied colors. To-day there remains on Manhattan Island but one real eighteenth-century farmhouse. Happily, however, for posterity, this is an excellent specimen of its kind (Frontispiece). It was built about 1783 but appears of earlier date, having features which suggest constructions of 1750–1760. It has the added interest of having been little changed since it was built. It had passed out of the hands of its original owners less than fifty years ago, and its various later tenants, feeling that the building would sooner or later be "pulled down," made no serious attempt to modernize it. But when at last the time came to demolish it, for apartment houses were growing up nearby—and its last owner could not be expected to preserve its valuable site for reasons historical—the old house, neglected and forlorn, made its appeal to the sentiment of the community—

should it go or should it in some way be preserved, to remain as the last of its kind, to leave to succeeding generations at least a memory of their forebears and of early times? (Fig. 1.) One of the first to make a serious effort to preserve the old house

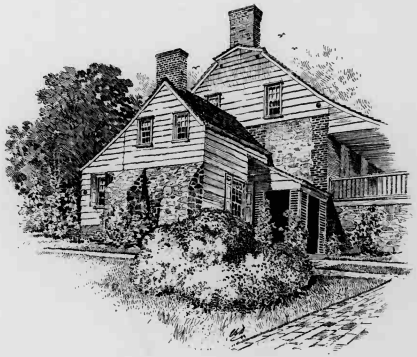

FIG. 1
DYCKMAN HOUSE. SOUTHEAST CORNER, SEEN FROM THE CORNER OF BROADWAY AND 204TH STREET

was the former Park Commissioner, Hon. Charles B. Stover, who drew up a report explaining its interest and suggesting ways and means for saving it. Prior to this, several patriotic societies discussed the project hopefully; and shortly afterward the Society of the Daughters of the Revolution, headed by Mrs. Everett M. Raynor, went so far as to raise the funds

necessary to move the building into the neighboring Isham Park. Thereupon the owners of the house, Mr. and Mrs. John H. Judge, came forward and offered to present the building to the City in case a suitable place for it could be found. Further examination showed, however, that the old house could not be placed in Isham Park—there was no adequate site for it there. On the other hand, a site might have been had on another part of the Isham Estate, for Mrs. Henry Osborn Taylor (who was Miss Julia Isham, and who had presented the Park to the City), had intimated, very generously, that she was interested in the fate of the old house and would consider with her family ways and means of giving it a home. But there still remained the serious question whether the house could be moved without danger of destroying it. It seemed, too, a pity to tear the old house from the land where it had so long stood. At this point two of the descendants of the original builder, Mrs. Bashford Dean (formerly Mary Alice Dyckman) and Mrs. Alexander McMillan Welch (formerly Fanny Fredericka Dyckman), expressed the wish to purchase the property, and, having restored house and grounds to their original condition, to present them to the City. This they offered to do in memory of their father, Isaac Michael Dyckman, who as a boy had lived in the house, and their mother, Fannie Blackwell (Brown) Dyckman, whose grandmother, Jemima Dyckman was married there. This offer was formally accepted by the City (November 12, 1915), at the recommendation of the present Park Commissioner, Hon. Cabot Ward, and the property became known as "the Dyckman House Park and

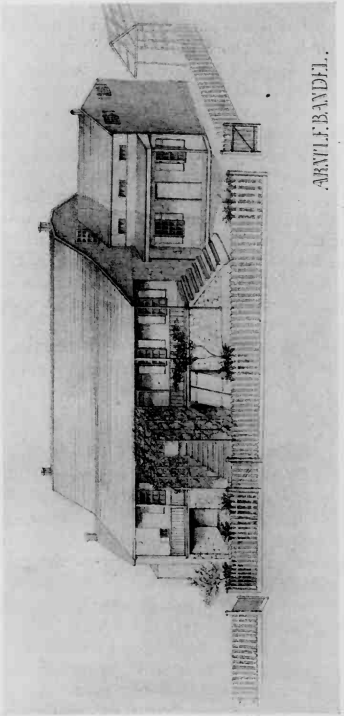

FIG. 2
EARLIEST PICTURE OF THE DYCKMAN HOUSE, ABOUT 1835. AFTER PENCIL-SKETCH BY THE FOREMAN OF THE FARM

necessary to move the building into the neighboring Isham Park. Thereupon the owners of the house, Mr. and Mrs. John H. Judge, came forward and offered to present the building to the City in case a suitable place for it could be found. Further examination showed, however, that the old house could not be placed in Isham Park—there was no adequate site for it there. On the other hand, a site might have been had on another part of the Isham Estate, for Mrs. Henry Osborn Taylor (who was Miss Julia Isham, and who had presented the Park to the City), had intimated, very generously, that she was interested in the fate of the old house and would consider with her family ways and means of giving it a home. But there still remained the serious question whether the house could be moved without danger of destroying it. It seemed, too, a pity to tear the old house from the land where it had so long stood. At this point two of the descendants of the original builder, Mrs. Bashford Dean (formerly Mary Alice Dyckman) and Mrs. Alexander McMillan Welch (formerly Fanny Fredericka Dyckman), expressed the wish to purchase the property, and, having restored house and grounds to their original condition, to present them to the City. This they offered to do in memory of their father, Isaac Michael Dyckman, who as a boy had lived in the house, and their mother, Fannie Blackwell (Brown) Dyckman, whose grandmother, Jemima Dyckman was married there. This offer was formally accepted by the City (November 12, 1915), at the recommendation of the present Park Commissioner, Hon. Cabot Ward, and the property became known as "the Dyckman House Park and

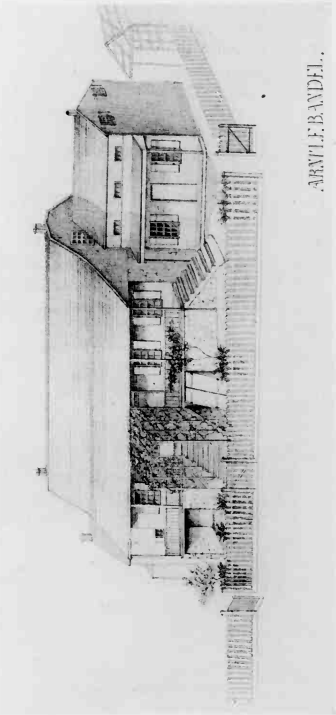

FIG. 2

EARLIEST PICTURE OF THE DYCKMAN HOUSE, ABOUT 1835. AFTER PENCIL-SKETCH BY THE FOREMAN OF THE FARM

Museum," for it was part of the plan of the donors to return to the house the old furniture and heirlooms of their forefathers. The contents of the Museum they explained, however, are not given to the City, but are to remain for the present as a loan.

The work of putting the house in order was immediately begun. Mr. Welch undertook the restoration of the house and grounds, and Mr. Dean planned the arrangement of the Museum. Happily, the changes which had befallen the original house were known; early pictures of it exist, one of them as early as 1835 (Fig. 2), and Mr. Welch, as the architect, had no difficulty in determining what necessary alterations should be made to bring the house back to its condition prior to the year 1800. The most important steps were to remove from the main construction a small north wing which was added about 1830, and to reconstruct the back porch, destroyed about 1880, the foundation stones for which still existed. Then, too, the smoke-house was to be replaced after a picture of the original one, a well-curb reproduced, and the roof reshingled. With these there were numerous small but troublesome repairs—rotted beams were to be mended, requiring much time and labor in the process, especially since it was decided that only hand-hewn timbers of similar age should be used in repairs. Within the house the only serious changes were in the woodwork of the hall and dining-room, which had been "modernized" about 1850. Here, however, it was only necessary to copy the older woodwork found either under the newer pieces, or in some other part of the house, and to obtain the lacking hinges, locks,

latches, hand-made nails, etc., from other houses of similar date. The double, or "Dutch," doors, fortunately, were original, save in the summer kitchen. It was then found necessary to repaint all original exterior woodwork, which was in bad condition, both to preserve it and to make it appear in its original state. And around the place a stone wall was built, whose details were designed to correspond with the walls of the house.

In arranging the interior of the house the effort was made to restore the rooms to their primitive condition. With this in view each room was studied carefully; thus, the original colors of walls and woodwork were discovered after removing later coats of paint, and the old furniture was put back, in so far as possible, into its original position.

The garden was given its brick paths very much on the old lines, and a number of the present trees and shrubs replace similar ones shown in early pictures. We note, by the way, that the lilac bushes at the south end of the house remain unchanged. The boxwood is approximately in its primitive position. And the old-fashioned flowers are not unlike those which flowered in similar beds over a century ago. Among the old-fashioned plants seen about the garden are hollyhocks, peonies, day lilies, roses of Sharon, rockets, clove pinks, and old-time roses. A few apple trees have been planted nearby to remind one of the great orchards which formerly surrounded the place, and, for reasons sentimental, a cherry tree has been grafted from the last known of the Dyckman cherries, which still stands in the field opposite the ancient house. This cherry repre-

sented an especial strain widely known in the early nineteenth century. According to family tradition, States Morris Dyckman, when travelling abroad, sent to his cousin, Jacobus Dyckman, then the owner of the house, a number of saplings of a German cherry then in vogue, the black Tartarean; one of these in the new environment produced a sport which soon became known as the Dyckman cherry, having fruit of delicate flavor and of great size. The race, unhappily, has long since run out. The most characteristic feature of the garden is easily the ancient boxwood which was generously given to the little park by Mr. Edmund D. Randolph, from his estate Brookside, at Mount St. Vincent, where it had flourished for nearly a century.

II

THE INTEREST OF ITS LOCALITY

THE region of the old house is of considerable antiquarian interest. Near its site was in earliest days a large Indian village. Even to-day Indian relics "turn up" not infrequently. The Creek, which formed a loop a few hundred yards north of the house, was a favorite fishing ground, famous, by the way, for striped bass, and in it were natural oyster-beds of great fertility. Shell-heaps marking camp sites are abundant, and in them have been found arrow points, sinkers for fish-nets, and the various odds and ends of aboriginal life. Cold Spring, which a few rods farther on bubbled up in great volume under the lee of "Cock Hill," was famous in Indian and Colonial times. Around the old house Indians camped, and from the shell beds and fire pits in the neighborhood many pieces of pottery have been obtained, some of which, of large size and extraordinary preservation, are exhibited in the American Museum of Natural History. The Indians remained in this neighborhood until well into the nineteenth century. The last of their race lived near the west end of the "cutting" for the ship

canal as late as 1835. Their stock, however, as on Long Island and elsewhere, had changed, having intermarried with negro slaves; and it is to be noted that in the neighboring Indian graveyards, where burials were made in the characteristic primitive fashion—the body bent and lying on its side on ashes and oyster shells, sometimes with a dog placed nearby—there are also found negro skeletons with which appear coffin nails and buttons. Quite close to the old house there were two Indian cemeteries, one east of the house and one almost south—the latter still used in the memory of Mr. Isaac Michael Dyckman as the burial-ground for negro servants. Of these there were many on the farm, some of them the descendants of slaves, most of them in part of Indian stock.

During the Revolution the region of Kingsbridge probably witnessed more of the actual doings of war than any other part of the revolted Colonies. For six years or more it sheltered armies whose goings and comings were every-day matters. Early in the war it was occupied by the Continental Army, probably as many as ten thousand troops, after the affair of Harlem Heights. It was evacuated just before the battle of White Plains and the local bridges (including a bridge of boats) were destroyed, though the Americans still held Fort Washington, Cock Hill Fort (Inwood Hill), and Fort Independence on Kingsbridge Heights, the last two of these to be abandoned the day after White Plains (*i. e.*, October 29, 1776), the first to be captured less than a month later. At this particular time the Dyckman farm swarmed with the enemy's troops. General Knyphausen and his Hessians advanced to attack the fort from Kingsbridge by the way of the "gorge," which is not far from the site of the present Broadway, beginning near Dyckman Street. After the fall of Fort Washington, when some twenty-three hundred American troops were captured, the Kingsbridge region became for seven years the actual outer defense of the British holding New York. And we learn much of the happenings there during later years through the serious memoirs (published 1798) of the American General Heath, and through the gossipy diary of a German soldier of fortune, von Krafft by name (published 1882, in Collections New York Historical Society), who gives, by the way, a topographical sketch of this region taken from the ledge of Laurel Hill (Fort George). And many details of this long occupation of the British here have lately been published by Mr. Reginald Pelham Bolton ("Relics of the Revolution," 1916). Thus we know where large camps were located, American, Hessian, Hanoverian, Highlander, Loyalist, and British Regular. Especially interesting is the information which has been discovered regarding the large camp or cantonment which was sheltered by the hillside a few hundred feet west of the Dyckman house, where log cabins were built, perhaps several hundred in number. Here Mr. Bolton and his associates, Messrs. Calver, Hall, Dunsmore, Thurston, and Barck, have labored for months, even years, digging up the ancient works and studying with antiquarian devotion the relics which were unearthed. In this connection we record gratefully Mr. Bolton's labor of love in supervising for us the reconstruction of an

officer's hut, which will long remain as an interesting relic of the Revolution in the little Dyckman Park. This hut is composed of materials (excepting wooden parts) taken from an actual hut in the neighboring hillside, and each stone is replaced in almost exact relation to its neighbors (Fig. 3).

FIG. 3

MR. BOLTON AND HIS FRIENDS DIGGING OUT THE STONEWORK OF THE REVOLUTIONARY HUT IN THE HILLSIDE WEST OF THE DYCKMAN HOUSE

The close of the Revolution saw many changes in the neighborhood of Kingsbridge. The camps were swept away, the huts were filled in or burned, the timber in part carried away for use in the upbuilding of ruined farmhouses, outbuildings and fences. New roads were established, notably Broadway, which arose during the war as a short cut from the forts below to the northern end of the island. And the period of "reconstruction" saw new houses established near it, like the present Dyckman house, the

planting of new farm land, and the blossoming out of new orchards—the older ones having been cut down to form a barricade between the two defenses to the south, Fort George and Fort Tryon. There was then in the air everywhere a feeling of confidence and of approaching national prosperity. In a letter of States Morris Dyckman, dated 1789, to a friend in England, he notes the 'change which has taken place in the disposition of the people—prosperity is at hand—and the change is decidedly for the better—they already show the effects of a good and permanent government.' Commerce began to flourish. Stages multiplied, and many private coaches and equestrians passed in front of the present house, and not a few stopped there for a chat with Mr. Jacobus Dyckman, who was widely known. The road was travelled by such personages as Washington, Hamilton, Schuyler, Lafayette, Chancellor Livingston, Burr, and Clinton. From that time until within a relatively few years the region of the old house has changed but little. As late as 1896 the quail were calling in Mr. Isaac Michael Dyckman's fields (near the present car shed of 218th Street)—just as they had near the same place when the last wild deer were shot a century and a half earlier.

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III

CONCERNING THE BUILDER OF THE HOUSE AND HIS FAMILY

WILLIAM DYCKMAN, who built the present house, was a grandson of Jan Dyckman, who came to New Amsterdam from Bentheim, Westphalia, toward the close of the Dutch occupation of New York (1660), settled in Harlem, and became one of the leading men of the new community. He is mentioned in the troubles with the Indians, when he was corporal of his company, and he is often referred to in the subsequent development of the uppermost part of Manhattan Island. With his associate, Jan Nagel, he was awarded a part of the present Dyckman tract about 1677, a portion of which land it is interesting to note remained in the hands of his descendants up to the present year, nearly two hundred and forty years later, when Mrs. Dean and Mrs. Welch exchanged two of the original lots for the adjacent two northern lots of the present little park. Jan Dyckman, it appeared, was an unusually energetic and far-sighted person. He it was who devised a means of inducing tenants to develop his land by offering leases of long standing on practically nominal terms. One of them gave his tenant the use of valuable

property for seven years for a rental of a hen a year. It was, moreover, his plan to select particular pieces of property of great fertility, insuring profitable development, and his success—and he was notably successful in his day—was due in no little measure to this kind of business judgment. It may be noted that his talent in this direction was hereditary. Each generation of Dyckmans added desirable land to the ancient farm. The family, in fact, early became conspicuous as investors in real estate, until at last their holdings stretched from the top of Fort George throughout the "Dyckman Tract," northward beyond 230th Street, eastward to the Harlem River, and westward to Broadway, in part to Spuyten Duyvil Creek and Tibbit's Brook.*

It became a family tradition that the Kingsbridge lands should be held in single hands and not subdivided among many children. The property was never entailed, still there was the understanding that the member of the younger generation who best exhibited the family trait should be the holder of the family estate, and be looked upon as the head of the family. The remaining children received their shares in money which ultimately came from the profits of the paternal farm.

Thus William Dyckman, mentioned above, was himself a third son when he inherited the estate from

* At one time (1868) their farm included about 400 acres, which is one of the largest in the history of Manhattan Island. We learn through the kindness of Judge James P. Davenport that its only rivals were the early farms of Petrus Stuyvesant (1805), James de Lancey (1785), and Teunis Eidesse Van Huyse (1720).

his father in 1773; his home was then near the Harlem River, on the north side of 210th Street, about 350 feet east of Ninth Avenue and near the old Century House, which was the early home of his cousins, the Nagels. This house we believe he built at the time of his marriage; his father's and grandfather's house, which was probably a larger and better one, was south and west of it (208–209th Streets, between Ninth and Tenth Avenues). But he did not long enjoy this family homestead. The Revolution came and Kingsbridge, as the headquarters of an army, was no longer a place of safety for his family, especially when his sympathies were with the Americans. So his home was abandoned and for the remainder of the war he lived with his cousins near Peekskill. He was then beyond the military age, and he appears to have taken no active part in the war. But four of his sons were soldiers, and of these two were given the rank of lieutenant and were chosen to serve among the famous Westchester County Guides. They are mentioned by General Heath in his memoirs as experts in this dangerous service. One of them, Michael Dyckman, learning the countersign of the Loyalists' camp in Fordham (just below the present buildings of New York University, and in sight of the old house—before the apartment houses appeared), led his party right into Emerich's cantonment and killed or captured forty refugees. Another time, and in the same region, his brother, Abraham Dyckman, followed by thirteen volunteer horsemen, took five prisoners of de Lancey's corps, and on their return, when attacked by the enemy's cavalry, "faced

about, charged vigorously, took one man prisoner with his horse and put the rest to flight." Abraham it was, too, who penetrated the Tory camp and took Captain Ogden prisoner in his quarters, while the British sentry was pacing nearby on Farmer's Bridge. General Heath goes out of his way to describe Mr. Dyckman as a "brave and active man." His next expedition was fatal, however, for he was wounded in an attack on the headquarters of Colonel de Lancey, whom he hoped to bring back a prisoner. The wounded guide was taken to Yorktown (near Peekskill), where he died several days later, probably with his father by his side. He was given a military funeral, at which General Washington was present.

When William Dyckman returned to Kingsbridge he found his old house burned to the ground—a costly compliment which the British paid the family for their services in the American cause. Then, too, the farm was a ruin in every sense—the fields were bare, orchards were cut down, and the last of the stock destroyed. Nevertheless the work of rehabilitation was immediately begun. Timbers were dragged from whatever of the old buildings still remained in the neighborhood to the site of the present house. Cut stone, too, appears to have been brought from the earlier sites. It is more than possible that the newer house is not widely different in plan from the earlier homestead. William Dyckman did not live to see the complete restoration of his farm. He died in 1787, probably in the little room in which the Pelham Bolton collection is now arranged. An interesting relic of him is his Bible

(Fig. 4), which is shown in the back hall-room with other mementoes of the family. Its records begin with his birth in 1725, though from its early date of publication (1702) it may have belonged to Jan Dyckman (died 1715), for it is possible that a page containing earlier records was lost. In itself the

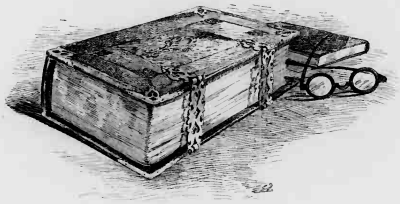

FIG. 4

DUTCH BIBLE OF WILLIAM DYCKMAN. PUBLISHED IN LEYDEN, 1702, AND CONTAINING FAMILY RECORDS

book is an excellent example of the Dutch Bible of its day, with wooden binding encased in pigskin, heavy brass mounts and numerous illustrations in copperplate. With its records of William Dyckman are those of his wife, Mary Turner, as the Bible spells it—for by that time the ancient spelling of her name, "de Tourneur," was overlooked. She was a granddaughter of Daniel de Tourneur, who fled from a little town in Picardy, about 1652, during Huguenot troubles. He was a prosperous burgher of New Harlem, becoming sheriff, magistrate and delegate to the general assembly. He was a man of

high spirit, losing his temper magnificently, the old records say, when reminded that the proximate cause of his emigration to America had been a homicide! It is known that Mr. de Tourneur, when attending the funeral of a friend, a Huguenot, in his native town had denied the king's command to stop the Protestant service, and when arrested by the officer of the guard had lost his temper, drawn his rapier, killed the officer and put the soldiers to flight. His granddaughter survived her husband by many years, dying in the old house in 1802.

William Dyckman's father was Jacob Dyckman (1692–1773), well known in his day for his keen interest in agriculture. He sought new seeds and experimented with them, and was an early importer of blooded stock; one of his letters is extant (1765), written to Sir William Johnson on the Mohawk, dealing with farming matters. He was a person of considerable determination; rather than pay the penny toll to the Philipse family for the use of their bridge over the Harlem, he is said to have rallied his friends and spent a small fortune building a long causeway and bridge which should be free for the farmers. This became known as the Farmers' Bridge, but is always called on old maps Dyckman's Bridge.

When William Dyckman died, in 1787, the farm passed to his eldest son, Jacobus, who added materially to the family holdings. He died in 1837, and was well remembered by his grandson, Isaac Michael Dyckman, from whom we learned that he was a man of tall stature, stooping somewhat in old age, and carrying a long cane painted in spiral bands

of green and white. He had dark complexion, steel-gray hair, strong features, aquiline nose and blue eyes. It is a pity that no portrait of him exists, for he was a man worthy of being remembered. As a young man he had been a soldier of the Continental army; when old he was widely known for his clear judgment and effective methods—which caused him to be elected a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1821. His copy of the minutes of this convention is preserved, and shows that he took part in almost every item of business transacted. At Kingsbridge, in his last years, he became the court of last appeal in local matters. In front of his gate might be seen the coaches of such of his neighbors as Mrs. Aaron Burr (Madame Jumel) and Mrs. Alexander Hamilton, who called upon him (let us hope not at the same time) for advice about the management of their property. To his house came people whose interest was farming or politics, and not a few scholars in their day. Two of his sons were graduates of Columbia College, and their preceptors were apt to visit them, especially Doctor David Hosack, the botanist and anatomist, who took an especial interest in the career of Jacob Dyckman (Columbia, 1810; medicine, 1813), the elder of the two, who promised to become one of the great medical men of the country. He was appointed Health Commissioner of New York while a very young man, but, contracting consumption, died in his early thirties. Incidentally, it was he, when secretary of the Philosophical Society, who obtained the Benjamin Franklin chair for his Alma Mater, which is still used by Columbia's presidents on state

occasions. A beautifully bound copy of Doctor Dyckman's book (1814) on the "Pathology of the Human Fluids" is shown in the present museum, which was presented to "Mr. Jacobus Dyckman from his affectionate and dutiful son, the Author." The doctor's younger brother, James (Jacobus), graduated from Columbia in 1811 (A. M. 1813), salutatorian of his class, became a lawyer, but died at the age of twenty-three. Some of his admirably written speeches are preserved, and a medal, "eloquentiæ premium," given him by the Peithologian Society of Columbia, 1810.

The property next passed to two younger sons of Jacobus Dyckman, Isaac and Michael, to whom had descended the family skill in its management. They remained unmarried, devoted themselves to their affairs and added to their holdings. For one thing fortune favored them: their great farm had the reputation of yielding the earliest and best varieties of fruits and vegetables, in a day, too, when the market could not depend upon distant producers. Then, also, it was found that the farm was a convenient stopping-point for the great herds of cattle which were sent "by hoof" to the Bull's Head Market. This fact, in a measure, was the cause of the decline of the Dyckman House. For while it was found profitable to allow the cattle to remain over night on the farm, it was also found far from pleasant to have them in the neighborhood, and to keep an eye on the herdsmen themselves, who, like the notorious Daniel Drew, would be apt to make themselves at home in their house. Hence it was that Isaac Dyckman and his brother abandoned

their grandfather's home and moved into the "old yellow house," pictured, by the way, in *Valentine's Manual* of 1861, which stood half a mile away on the upper part of the farm, surrounded by splendid boxwood, and overlooking a little creek and a tide-mill, which later became the site of the present ship canal. In this house the elder and surviving brother, Isaac, died in 1868. Isaac Dyckman was remembered as a man of considerable influence in the community. He was a fluent speaker, tall, good looking, and pleasant in manner. He was for a long time Alderman in a day when this post was one of considerable honor. We are told that when he passed by the local schoolhouse, the land for which he had, by the way, presented to the City, the children gathered in military fashion, the boys on one side of the street, the little girls on the other, and saluted and curtsied.

At the death of Mr. Dyckman it was found that the large estate was to be divided. There were no heirs bearing the name of Dyckman, and the property was to be sub-divided, especially among a number of nephews and nieces, one of whom became the principal heir. This was James Frederick Dyckman Smith, who, in memory of his uncles, in 1868 became by act of legislature Isaac Michael Dyckman. He was the son of Mr. Dyckman's sister Hannah, who had married Squire Caleb Smith, of Yonkers; he had lived in the homestead since 1820, when as a boy of seven he had gone to Kingsbridge to visit his grandfather, Jacobus Dyckman. It seems that the boy had the faculty of making friends, and affectionate ones, so it was not remarkable that first his grandfather and later his uncles tried to keep him with them and wished to train him to be their successor. For this meant a great deal to them, both in sentiment and practice, for the estate required especial care in its up-keep, and the surviving uncle, Isaac Dyckman, came naturally to look to his nephew for help in all directions. This was then the more necessary, since at that time the property had reached its greatest dimensions.

Mr. Isaac Michael Dyckman (b. 1813) lived in the old house between 1820 and about 1850; thereafter he moved with his uncles to the yellow house already noted. He married, in 1867, his kinswoman, Fannie Blackwell Brown, daughter of Benjamin and Hannah (Odell) Brown, of Yonkers, and great-granddaughter of Jacobus Dyckman, and built the home still standing on 218th Street, west of Broadway, where he lived the greater part of the time until his death in 1899. With Mrs. Dyckman he devoted himself largely to religious and charitable affairs. He was for a long time ruling elder and treasurer in the Mount Washington Presbyterian Church, which still stands on the corner of Dyckman Street, and he was a constant attendant at the meetings of the New York Presbytery, of which he was a member. He was greatly interested in historical and educational matters, acting as trustee to the old Dyckman Library and founding in Columbia University a research fund in memory of his uncles, Jacob and Jacobus, Columbia, 1810, 1811. Mrs. Dyckman survived her husband fifteen years, dying in 1914, and at her death, leaving no male issue, the family name in the region of Kingsbridge be-

came extinct, after having been identified with the locality for about two and a half centuries. Mrs. Dyckman, it may be mentioned, followed sympathetically her husband's interests; she gave generously to benevolent societies, missions and churches.

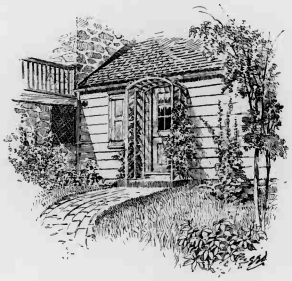

FIG. 5

SUMMER KITCHEN IN SOUTHERN EXTENSION
REAR DOORWAY

IV

THE DYCKMAN HOUSE: DETAILS

THE Dyckman house stands on what is now the northwest corner of 204th Street and Broadway. The avenue in front of it has been lowered about fifteen feet, leaving the house on a knoll. Even in early days, however, it was situated on a rise of land which looked southeastward over the wide-spread apple orchards towards the Harlem River and Fordham (where now the New York University forms a landmark); to the south rose the heights of Fort George and Fort Washington; on the west was the ridge of Inwood, early known as Mount Washington, and through the notch at the west end of Dyckman Street one had a glimpse of the Palisades. In the spring it overlooked a fair country, with a foreground of green meadows and browsing herds, a middle distance of flowering orchards of apple, peach and cherry. Its owner might have long sat on this wide front porch, settled comfortably in a deep slat-backed armchair, soothed by the hum of bees in the blossoms nearby, and watching lazily through the rings of smoke from a long-stemmed pipe the post-rider as he passed the thirteenth milestone, which was nearly in front of the old house.

The house itself has basement, parlor floor, bedroom floor and attic (Fig. 1). It is well built. Its stone walls are twenty inches thick, and are continued up to the window ledges of the sleeping-room floor; above them heavy, hand-hewn white oak beams covered with wide clapboards fill in the space to the peak of the gambrel roof, which, incidentally, has an exceptionally graceful curve.

The house had two extensions. The one to the south contained the summer kitchen and will later be described. The one to the north was relatively new, dating about 1830, built to provide additional room for servants. This has now been removed.

There are two rare features in the construction of the old house. It had a front of brick instead of field-stone, and it had also a basement. The latter was a feature which possibly arose from the situation of the house, for it was built against a ledge of rock, which supports the entire rear wall, and permitted, therefore, an unusual depth below.

In the basement was a winter kitchen, having a large brick fireplace; beside this room, at the north, was a roomy and dry cellar, which no doubt was well provisioned in its day with winter vegetables and pans of milk resting on swinging shelves, the supports of which are still preserved. Into this cellar one might enter from without, from an inclined passageway, down a couple of steps, and through sloping cellar doors, in the ancient Dutch fashion.

The parlor floor is margined east and west by wide porches continued the full length of the house. It has the usual broad hall extending through the middle of the house from front to back, opening

right and left into the main rooms. Here stands a tall Dutch clock. On the right as we enter the front door one looks into the parlor, at the left into the dining-room, which was just above the winter kitchen. In front is the narrow staircase, margined primly with a straight cherry rail, and below the turn of the stairs one sees through the opened half-door the trees on the slope of Inwood Ridge. Behind the parlor and also opening into the hall was a smaller room, known as Isaac Dyckman's room, and across the hall, opening by a doorway under the staircase, one could descend to the winter kitchen, or could enter through a small, dark passageway up and down three steps into a small back room, and thence into the rear of the dining-room. This room was known as Grandfather Dyckman's, and here, we believe, died William Dyckman in 1787.

The sleeping-room floor includes five rooms. Of two small bedrooms at the rear only one opens into the hall—this is called Isaac Michael Dyckman's room. The two main rooms north and south are known, respectively, as the uncles' room and Jacobus Dyckman's room; into the latter opened the second rear room, which is believed to have been occupied by the youngest children. The front of the hall was enclosed as a dark, servant's or nurse's bedroom, from which passed curious low storage spaces, "like secret passageways," north and south, formed by the overhanging eaves and lighted by small bull's-eyes at either end of the house. A stepladder leads to the garret, in which one may see the hand-hewn timber of the old house reaching upward to the gable and roofing a space which was invaluable in domestic

economy of olden times. Here stood disused bedsteads, ancient hide-covered trunks, supernumerary band-boxes, spinning-wheels and the like. This great space was again lighted by bull's-eyes at either end of the house.

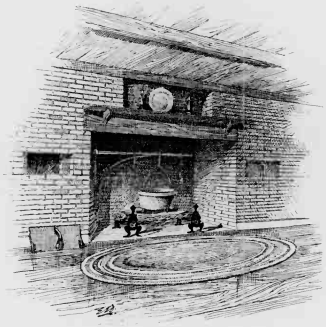

FIG. 6
KITCHEN FIREPLACE, SHOWING BAKE-OVENS

The southern addition contains, as we have said, a summer kitchen (Figs. 5 and 6), and above it was a large servants' room. This addition, we believe, was really of earlier date than the house itself, having probably been built prior to the American Revolution. For we know that the main building was erected in or about 1783, the year when William Dyckman returned to his home after the evacuation of the city by the British. His old house had been

burned and he probably lived in the present addition, which served earlier as a foreman's cottage, or was possibly part of his first house, from 210th Street. This is evidenced by the character of the ceiling of its main room, which shows open rafters with beaded edges, also an early type of fireplace. Another reason for its greater age is that its north wall is covered with clapboards, although it faced the stone wall of the main house, thus showing conclusively that the stone wall must either have been built against the clapboards or that the small addition must subsequently have been moved up against the house. During the first half of the nineteenth century this addition was occupied by the cook, black Hannah, who had been born on the place as the daughter of a slave who was partly of Indian blood. Tradition describes her with a bright-colored headgear, face black as ebony, temper decidedly irregular, and a strong leaning toward a corncob pipe. Her kitchen, with its white floor strewn with sand in patterns, did not open into the house itself, but on a porch from which one had also access to the winter kitchen.

In arranging the interior of the house, the effort has been made to preserve the appearance of each room in its original condition. The old pieces of furniture taken from the house when Isaac Dyckman moved away have been carefully collected and put back, so far as possible, in their original position. Where objects from the homestead were not preserved their place is filled with similar pieces which, with but few exceptions,* were in the possession of

*We except also kitchen utensils in large part.

other members of the Dyckman family or of its connections.

The house is interesting, therefore, as exhibiting with considerable accuracy the indoor surroundings of a well-to-do family about the year 1800. And they are the more interesting since the conditions of those simpler days are rapidly fading from memory. How many to-day, for example, even those of us who pride ourselves on our housekeeping and cookery, could go into one of the old kitchens of the present house and make use of the apparatus there? How many of us could start a kitchen fire without the use of matches?—some of us do not know a tinder-box when we see one, far less the practical use of flint and steel. The art of such primitive fire-making is well-nigh forgotten. Even such an expert in Colonial matters as Alice Morse Earle, who has written delightfully of ancient customs, confesses that she has never learned the trick of the tinder-box, which probably any Dyckman child of six could have shown her! How many of us could build a wood fire which would last, fix a back log, or bank embers so they would keep like vestal fire—or use convincingly the curious trammels or pot hooks for the huge kettles, or skillets, or skimmers, or waffle-irons, or a Dutch oven or a bake oven? The former oven is the contrivance in tin which stands in front of the open fireplace in the present winter kitchen to collect the heat and reflect it upon an object which was slowly rotated on a spit, sometimes with the aid of a trained "turnspit" dog. Of bake ovens, we have two excellent specimens in the summer kitchen (Fig. 6), so large that they appear on the outside of the house,

projecting behind the chimney like buttresses, and indicating the size of the farm and the number of its slaves and helpers to be provided for. These were by no means as convenient in use as the modern kitchen oven; they required special fuel, which was laid in a definite way so as to produce a rapid, hot fire, a flue connecting the oven with the kitchen chimney. When the brick walls of the oven were hot, the ashes were removed, the oven floor cleaned, and the pies, bread and cake introduced, all at the same time, and all on the bare floor. The oven door was then closed and baking began. At the end the objects would be taken out by the aid of the wooden shovel, or "peel."

In those days there were no convenient shops at which house-keeping supplies, including the commonest dry goods, could be purchased. Even candles, the only means of lighting the house, were made at home: the tallow was hoarded and tried out, wicks were made and candles fashioned in moulds like the ones seen here. So, too, soap had to be made at intervals—not very attractive looking soap either—lard-like and messy, for "hard soap" was then a new invention and little used. Soft soap was made by "cutting" kitchen fats with a strong lye, which the housewife dissolved out of wood ashes in a great iron pot, hence the name of the alkali "potash." When the housewife was not busy supervising such work as this, or cooking, or "tending" children, she visited the dairy, or looked after the chickens, geese and ducks, sewed and spun—for in those days her work began early and ended never. Her spinning was often relaxation, like the fancy-work of her great-

granddaughter, and she prided herself on the thinness and evenness of the linen thread which her hard-tipped fingers twisted from the great hank of golden flax, while her foot pressed the treadle automatically; or on the perfect strands of worsted she spun as she tapped the tall wool-wheel round. Even the weaving of the linen or cloth was apt to be done under the same roof by some skilful member of the family, whose loom was at other times stored away in the garret. Shoes, too, were nearly always fashioned in the house, either by home talent or by a journeyman cobbler who appeared at regular intervals and shod the entire family, from baby to grandfather. Almost every house had then its collection of lasts and its kit of tools. In those days work of this kind was not despised by even wealthy people, and to learn a trade was almost as much a part of a boy's education as to learn the three R's.

In all old houses, lanterns appear to us surprisingly abundant until one considers how useful they were inside of a house where halls were unlighted, and where almost every room not in use was dark—and outside of a house where streets were dirty and so uneven that to carry a lantern became almost a means of self-preservation. Near one of the present lanterns is a rattle which was used by a watchman in calling for help, or by a householder when scenting burglars. For in those days there was no police station to be telephoned to, and each house had very largely to protect itself. Hence a loaded firelock usually appeared in some corner or was hung above the mantelpiece—and not uncommonly a sword or two. In the present house the Revolutionary musket hanging in the large kitchen belonged to one of the Dyckmans, probably Jacobus, already mentioned.

The interest of the old house is evidently the greater if the visitor is able to picture it in olden times. And to aid his vision he must be willing to examine the details of structure and furnishings and to decide how and why they were used, and what they accompanied. The chairs tell us of a straight-backed generation, when life was far more earnest than to-day, when emotions, whether laughter or tears, were repressed, when children were kept apart and were not allowed to sit down in their elders' presence without formal permission. The moulding or chair-rail, about the wall, shows that chairs were often placed close to the plaster, which was thus prudently guarded against injury. The mantels, which, by the way, are the original ones, save in the dining-room, are tall, narrow and formal, simple in ornament, with ledge just wide enough for the silver or Sheffield candlesticks and the snuffers corresponding, which stood between them on a tray, or the candelabra with crystal pendants of slightly later date, which in the present parlor were lighted splendidly on formal occasions, when guests talked of the duel of Burr and Hamilton, or of the *Clermont* puffing up the Hudson, or of Decatur's African pirates. During a later evening, when logs crackled on the wide hearth, and the andirons, tongs and shovel shone like gold, Isaac Michael Dyckman as a boy declaimed before his admiring uncles Jefferson's speeches, or Cicero's "Cataline," which his tutor, "old Curtis from Dartmouth," had just taught

him in the upstairs room. The little window-panes speak of the time when glass was more easily had in small "lights"—when panes were green, uneven and bubbly, rusting in the air from poor chemical composition. But while glass was rare, iron was conspicuous, as one infers from the door hinges and their massive construction, for part of the hinge ran strap-like over the woodwork before carpenters learned to hide the metal within the crease of the door. Double doors are characteristic of Dutch houses, with their curious hinges and latches which enabled the housewife to keep doors open but at the same time keep out of her halls the tracking feet of domestic animals—and children. On our front door is the knocker from a Dyckman house (Boscobel), which probably all older members of the family have used from 1795.

Substantial furniture, mainly of mahogany, was in use in those days. And the present chairs, tables, dressers and sideboard are good examples of their class. In the dining-room the Dyckman sideboard is still in its place of honor, bearing family Sheffield and cut-glass decanters. The excellent eight-legged dining table, dating from 1740, belonged to a connection of the family, and held in early times many heavy trenchers of pewter, blue-and-white crockery, slim Colonial silver,—and not a few corpses, for in those days the state table was used to support the coffin at family funerals.

The bedrooms suggest many by-gone customs. The four-post bedsteads, with their curtains and valances, recall the days when bedrooms were usually unheated and draughty, and when the use

of heavy nightgowns was general and of nightcaps, for men, women and children, was universal. The Dyckman warming-pan by the fireplace, when filled with hot embers, has taken the chill from many a cold feather-bed in the olden times. And in the winged chair Jemima Dyckman has sat near a window, yet comfortably out of the draught, while the room was being heated by a Franklin, such as one sees now in the fireplace. This kind of an iron fireplace, invented late in the eighteenth century, brought the heat more economically into the room and was the progenitor of the long line of iron stoves. Nearby one sees the family cradle, a heavy box-like affair, in which generations of Dyckman babies, including Mrs. Isaac Michael Dyckman, were thoroughly rocked. Some of them grew up to work with patient fingers the samplers which one sees framed on the walls nearby.

Two rooms have been set aside more definitely for museum purposes. Behind the dining-room, in William Dyckman's bedroom, one may examine the Reginald Pelham Bolton collection of objects of local interest. These have been recovered by Mr. Bolton and his friends from Revolutionary camp sites and from ash heaps and kitchen middens of the early houses in the neighborhood. The Dyckman houses yielded many of the important objects here shown, including fragments of leaded glass which one hardly associates with early American domestic architecture. There are also primitive knives, forks, spoons, brooches, fragments of Dutch tiles, coins, and many specimens of pottery and porcelain. The latter show, by the way, not a little artistic merit.

It is from an examination of this material that one sees clearly that the early people of the neighborhood were fond of good things and chose them intelligently.

In the second room, immediately behind the parlor, which belonged to Isaac Dyckman, one sees numerous family heirlooms of all kinds, some from the Kingsbridge Dyckmans and some from their cousin, States Morris Dyckman, who lived near Peekskill, at Kings Ferry, where his house, Boscobel, still exists. Many of the latter objects were bought by States Dyckman during his years' travels abroad and have considerable artistic interest. With a number of them appear original bills, *e. g.*, from Josiah Wedgwood for the specimens of blue-and-white cameo-ware here shown. Probably the most personal relic of the early owners of the house is the family Bible (Fig. 4), which occupies a place in the central case. Here also are objects of jewelry, books showing early bookplates, silverware and porcelain. Mr. Isaac Dyckman's desk stands nearby, which contained formerly many old papers and sheepskin indentures relating to the present property. On the walls are portraits, early letters, maps and documents showing the signatures of pioneers in the neighborhood.

V

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DURING the past year not a little generous help has been given us in our effort to restore the old house. The first one to befriend us was the Commissioner of Parks, Hon. Cabot Ward, seconded by Mr. Carl F. Pilat. Next to them should be mentioned Mr. Reginald Pelham Bolton, who contributed his unique collection above mentioned, representing years of practical research, and who has given his time and knowledge freely in restoring for us the Revolutionary hut. With Mr. Bolton's collection is shown a painting contributed by his friend and co-worker, Mr. John Ward Dunsmore, which reconstructs very interestingly the British Camp (about 1780) behind the Dyckman house. We have already mentioned Mr. Edmund D. Randolph's gift of the century-old boxwood which came from his place, "Brookside," at Mount Saint Vincent. We should now mention our indebtedness to the Misses Cruger, of Crugers, who are the descendants of Mr. States Morris Dyckman, for it is thanks to their cordial co-operation that we are able to show many important objects which belonged to their side of the family. With these Dyckman relics they presented us an ancient trunk filled with correspondence and

bills of Mr. Dyckman, including about one thousand letters and documents covering the period from 1774 to 1806, which we hope some day to edit and publish. We gratefully acknowledge the gift from Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Allien of the rare eighteenth-century Dutch tiles, quite similar to those found in fragments in the Revolutionary huts, which has enabled us to restore very interestingly the dining-room fireplace.

For various objects exhibited we are indebted to many donors and lenders, including Mrs. Robert W. de Forest, Mr. William H. White, Dr. Henry C. Mercer, Mrs. Sarah S. Frishmuth, Mr. and Mrs. C. Otto von Kienbusch, Mr. George M. Edsall, Mr. Jacob A. Smith, Mr. Robert R. Perkins, Miss Elizabeth Stratford, Captain and Mrs. William Bingham, Mrs. Arthur V. Youmans, Prof. and Mrs. Charles P. Warren, Mrs. Dwight Franklin, Mr. John Harden, Jr., the Misses Mary and Elizabeth Drennan, and Mr. and Mrs. Frederick A. de Peyster. The excellent dining-room chairs belonged to the father of Prof. Samuel F. B. Morse, of telegraph fame, and come to us through the heirs of the late G. Livingston Morse, whose family has for generations been friends of the Dyckmans. We record, also, generous loans and donations from various members of the family and its connections, especially from Mrs. Mary G. Waters, Mr. James H. B. Brown, Miss Carrie J. Fulton, Miss Mary E. Fulton, Miss Cora S. Requa, Mr. Rufus King, Rev. Henry M. Dyckman, the Misses Helen and Isabel Dyckman, Mrs. J. C. Courter, Miss Alberta M. Welch, Mr. and Mrs. William Dean, Miss Harriet Martine Dean and

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Gaudinier Dean. To Miss Dorothy Dean we are indebted for generous help in arranging the collection.

Our acknowledgments would be seriously incomplete if we failed to record the kind co-operation of Miss Clarisse H. Livingston and of Mr. J. Romaine Brown, who exchanged lots with the donors in order to enable them to extend the Broadway frontage of the Dyckman Park. We note, finally, the generous help in many directions of Mr. John H. Judge, former owner of the property, to whose antiquarian interest, and that of his late wife, Winifred E. Judge, the preservation of the old house was long due.

BASHFORD DEAN,
ALEXANDER MCMILLAN WELCH,
Honorary Curators.

PORTRAITS OF MR. AND MRS. ISAAC M. DYCKMAN, IN WHOSE MEMORY THE DYCKMAN HOUSE PARK AND MUSEUM IS RESTORED AND PRESENTED TO THE CITY

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